



## 2012 Volunteer Report

Volunteerism continues to make positive impacts on Valley Forge National Historical Park. The park's Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) Program in FY2012 strengthened its broad community reach; building on the wide range of types of opportunities; and its emphasis on engaging new and diverse audiences. As part of the park's core goal of incorporating volunteers in a meaningful way into all operations, park staff continues to think creatively to develop new programs or to augment existing programs that meet these objectives, working hand and hand with park partners to be an integral part of surrounding communities while getting much needed work accomplished.

## Highlights

A total of 3,210 volunteers donated 53,703.20 hours of service helping with all program areas in FY2012. Natural resource opportunities continue to be popular community activities; almost 9,000 volunteer hours were donated in FY2012. The volunteer base continues to be expanded through working with Student Conservation Association, AmeriCorps NCCC, Sierra Club, and many others. Volunteers helped with the control of removing non-native invasive crayfish, removal of exotic invasive plants; inventorying birds; and establishing and supporting riparian buffers. In FY2012 a new volunteer program called Keepers of the Stream, also known as Stream Watch, was developed. This program represents a network of trained, informed volunteers who walk sections of Valley Creek on a quarterly basis to document baseline stream conditions, provide early warning/early detection of threats to the health of the stream, and promote rapid reporting of problems such as fish kills.



Although we had no public archeology program in FY2012, the park had several volunteer interns who participated in small excavation projects working alongside the park's archeologist.

Maintenance volunteers donated more than 15,000 hours assisting with backlog maintenance projects, trail preservation, painting, reroofing replica soldier huts, repairing fencing and much more. Through a partnership with Appalachian Mountain Club trails maintenance and stabilization work is conducted by volunteers who donated 1,500 hours to help maintain 10 miles of the park's 30-mile trail system. For the first time in FY2012, American Hiking Society in partnership with Appalachian Mountain Club spent one week in the park on a volunteer vacation helping with trails stabilization projects.

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## Highlights Continued

Area corporations, schools, and youth organizations assisted with garden maintenance and much more. Lockheed Martin Corporation, Network of Volunteer Associates (NOVA), worked with staff to help with replica soldier hut maintenance.

Lockheed Martin Corporation, Network of Volunteer Associates (NOVA) was awarded Valley Forge National Historical Park's Volunteer of the Year for 2012. For more than 20 years volunteers from the Lockheed Martin Corporation's NOVA have shown an unwavering commitment to Valley Forge National Historical Park. They have taken on such projects as the maintenance and preservation of soldier replica huts, donating and planting ornamental vegetation, mulching trees, and the project that started their service in the park, working with natural resources planting wildflowers to help with meadow restoration. NOVA was also instrumental in developing and maintaining the Muster Roll of soldiers present at the encampment by developing software and providing data input for the system now available at the Visitor Center and on the Internet.

The Living History Program volunteers in 2012 focused on skill development through educational workshops and hands-on training opportunities. The workshops included "Meet Pete" for the Peter Muhlenberg Brigade, "Washington Slept Here" for Washington's Headquarters, and "A Landlord and a Boarder" for Varnum's Quarters.

Thirty-three veteran and newer volunteers came together with a renewed commitment to actively support the park's living history program and one another by sharing historical knowledge, personal experiences, and best practices. New in FY 2012, three veteran volunteers became Volunteer Liaisons. These volunteers worked with park staff assisting the division of interpretation and education with communications and operations at the park's historic sites. The liaisons served as leaders on the front line while continuing their living history volunteer duties and assisting NPS staff and partners with training sessions.

Other training sessions include "Pulse of the Park" in partnership with the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau staff, on customer service and the visitor center desk, "Dress for Success in the 18th Century" conducted by the Valley Forge curator for living history volunteers, and a behind-the-scenes vault tour of artifacts, historical documents and photos. Participating volunteers had the opportunity to learn about the park's natural resources and environmental preservation issues. Volunteers also had the option to be certified at one of three levels, (site specific, park-wide, or advanced park-wide) depending on the number of training sessions completed.

For the ninth year in a row fifteen members from across the country of the National Sierra Club Outing Vacation came for a one-week service trip to help with natural resources and maintenance related projects. They also had the opportunity to participate in guided hikes, a guided trolley tour, and a behind the scene vault tour as well as time to explore the surrounding area.

On National Trails Day, Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania gathered some 3,000 girls and family members from the Philadelphia and surrounding areas in celebration of their 100 Anniversary, participated in fun, educational activities. This partnership provided an opportunity for first time park visitors to experience the National Park Service, and the history and resources at Valley Forge National Historical Park.

## Expanded Partnerships in Support of Volunteering

The Friends of Valley Forge Park (FOVFP) continue to be major supporters of volunteerism at the park. FOVFP provides numerous volunteer support services, including sponsoring annual stewardship events, hosting the park's annual volunteer recognition event, recruiting volunteers, sponsoring a lunch-time lecture series at which volunteer presenters spoke on cultural and natural topics, reaching more than 1,000 attendees for the surrounding communities. The Friends provided support for the park's Living History Volunteer Program and worked with staff to develop a living history program that provides hands-on activities. Members of the Friends donated over 5,000 volunteer hours to all park programs.

The Young Friends of Valley Forge Park work to reach young professionals that are interested in actively supporting the park. In FY2012 they organized a Youth Fun Run, recruited volunteer to help with projects during the Martin Luther King Day of Service and National Public Lands Day, and raised almost \$1000 for park sustainability during a one-day BBQ benefit. The group continues to reach out to the local communities and actively seek new members to strengthen support for the park. As a result the Young Friends membership tripled in FY2012.

We continue to work in partnership with the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, helping to recruit and train Trail Ambassadors for the park's section of the 27-mile long regional Schuylkill River Trail, which receives 250,000 users per month. Ambassadors hike or bike the trail, providing informal interpretation and safety information, assisting trail users, alerting the park to issues, and leading volunteer clean-up days.

Our long-time partnership with the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors' Bureau (CVB) is a valuable and key part of our contributing to our visitor experience. The CVB continues to assist in the management and operation of the Visitor Center Desk.

Community involvement continues to grow with the popular hands-on stewardship events such as Martin L. King Day of Service, National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day. All stewardship events in FY2012 had a record number of participants.

## Developing Future Stewards

Valley Forge through a continuum of hands-on volunteer opportunities continues to reach youth ages 6-18 years old, from diverse communities, and with various interests. The park staff continues to be creative in the development of fun, hands-on learning opportunities which have allowed the park to reach new audiences, giving us an even broader reach into the community. In 2012 more than half of the park's youth volunteers were first time park visitors.

We continue to build on the robust volunteer programs for young people. Youth volunteers assisting with natural resource-related projects increased 50% over the previous year. There was a 35% increase in youth assisting with maintenance and cultural resources related projects in FY2012.

We continue to make strategic investments of park funds and staff time in youth development programs including strengthening our partnership with the Student Conservation Association National High School Crew (1,092 hours of service), the Student Conservation Association Philadelphia Community Crew (2,888 hours of service from inner-city youth), and AmeriCorps NCCC (2,869 hours of service from a diverse crew).

We believe we can continue to grow with the support of the surrounding communities and partners and focusing on the park mission as we continue to provide great opportunities for volunteers of all ages and backgrounds.



## *Special thanks to all who volunteered to support the park in FY 2012:*



The Vanguard Group  
Independence Blue Cross Blue Shield  
Johnson and Johnson  
Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary College  
Valley Forge Military Academy & College  
Friends of Valley Forge Park  
Boy Scout of America  
The Network of Volunteer Associates (NOVA)  
SunGard Availability Services  
Keystone Foods  
Montgomery County PA Corporate Mortgage Company  
Verizon Telephone Pioneers  
King of Prussia Disney Store  
Wegmans Markets  
REI Conshohocken  
Eastern Mountain Sports-Exton  
Starbucks at King of Prussia  
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – PA  
State Parks Region 4  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Energy Coordinating Agency, Inc  
Audubon Society – Valley Forge  
Friends of Valley Forge Park  
Green Lane Nature Center  
Trout Unlimited  
John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum  
Delaware Riverkeeper Network  
South Eastern Search and Rescue  
King of Prussia Rotary Club  
Girl Scouts of America  
Delaware Valley College of Wildlife Society  
Verizon Telecom Pioneers  
DELVACCA - Johnson Matthey Inc  
St. Matthew's United Methodist Church  
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Delaware Valley Orienteering Association  
Philly Fit Fast Tracks  
Philadelphia Zoo  
Bartram's Garden  
Longwood Gardens  
Upper Schuylkill Valley Park Wildlife Center  
Delaware Valley Appalachian Mountain Club  
Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area  
St. Matthew's United Methodist Church  
Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services Dept  
Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition  
WholeFoods Market  
Devon Prudential Fox and Roach Realtors  
PA Department of Environmental Protection  
Lockheed –Martin, Network of Volunteer Association  
Starbucks- King of Prussia Mall  
Audubon Society – Valley Forge  
King of Prussia Rotary Club  
Penn State Alumni  
Glaxo Smith Kline  
LexisNexis  
Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania  
Sierra Club National Outing Volunteer Vacation  
American Hiking Society Outing Vacation  
Student Conservation Association  
Comcast Corporation  
Vanguard  
AmeriCorps NCCC  
Royal Bank of America  
Once Upon A Nation  
Valley Forge Visitor and Convention Bureau  
T/E Middle Schools  
Energy Coordinating Agency  
Schuylkill Programs Delaware Riverkeeper Network  
Elmwood Park Zoo  
Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers  
National Park Conservation Association  
Radnor Middle School's Watersheds Program  
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And, to the many individuals